

OPEN LETTERS.

Unfair criticism.

Two thoroughly bad kinds of criticism are prevalent in scientific literature and frequently enough crop out in American journals. One is the indiscriminate and fulsome praise of books and papers written by one's personal friends, or by official superiors, or by people with whom one wishes to curry favor. The other is the malicious detraction, or misrepresentation, or damning by faint praise of articles written by individuals personally disagreeable to the reviewer. The latter is carried to such an extent by some persons both in America and Europe that, if the reader is not personally acquainted with the subject-matter, he must find out the personal relations of reviewer to writer before deciding what weight to give the review. This is all wrong. It injures the writer, makes the reviewer ridiculous, and to a certain extent impedes the progress of science. A good rule is never to review the writings of one's avowed enemies or warm personal friends. The strict adherence to this rule would result in reviews of a much higher order. What botanical science in this country needs most of all is *honest* and *fearless* criticism from which personal likes and dislikes have been eliminated. Nothing else would so tend to repress the flood of foolish writings, and to stimulate good work.—ERWIN F. SMITH, *Washington, D. C.*

The editorial committee of "Science."

In an editorial note in the January issue of the BOTANICAL GAZETTE you criticise *Science* for having several editors for zoology and only one for botany. The Editorial Committee of *Science* is composed of those who took the most active part in the reorganization of the journal. It so happens that in zoology and in anthropology there are two representatives, whereas for equally important subjects, such as physics and botany, there is only one representative. We trust, however, that botany in all its departments will be fully represented in the contents of the journal.—J. MCK. CATTELL, *Columbia College, Jan. 26, 1895.*